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NPT, VM

SUBJECT: VIETNAM'S VIEWS ON THE NPT

REF: A) STATE 6970, B) HANOI 76

¶1. (SBU) In a February 11 discussion with the MFA IO officer responsible for non-proliferation matters, Vu Tran Phong, Deputy PolCouns outlined U.S. priorities for the NPT in anticipation of the third Preparatory Committee meeting in May prior to the NPT Review Conference in 2010. He emphasized U.S. priorities as outlined in ref. A, and asked for Vietnam's views on the Treaty. (Note: On February 4, we provided Phong with the list of questions as a non-paper. End note.)

¶2. (SBU) Phong declined to address ref. A questions one-by-one, preferring instead to offer Vietnam's general position; however, in the course of his presentation, and through subsequent conversation, he addressed most of the points:

¶A. What are Vietnam's objectives for the NPT in general, and for the current review process in particular?

Phong said that Vietnam strongly supports the NPT's objectives, but emphasized that all three "pillars" -- disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy -- should be given equal weight. Noting that he had been involved in discussions in New York as the action officer on non-proliferation matters for Vietnam's Mission at the UN, Phong said that Vietnam shared U.S. "disappointment" that the last Review Conference in 2005 had not been more productive and hopes that the 2010 RevCon will be more substantive.

¶B. What policies or actions regarding the NPT does Vietnam hope to see from the United States?

Vietnam supports "complete and total disarmament," Phong said, emphasizing that established nuclear states have particular obligations under Article Six of the NPT and should undertake the 13 steps outlined in the 2000 RevCon.

¶C. What does Vietnam believe would represent a successful outcome to the current NPT cycle ending with the 2010 Review Conference? How important is it to reach consensus on substantive matters?

While not explicitly addressing consensus, Phong stressed that Vietnam believes that "every Party must work together" to meet the NPT's objectives.

¶D. Does Vietnam believe that NPT parties should take action to address the NPT issues described below? What actions would Vietnam support?

-- Noncompliance with the NPT, for example, on the part of Iran and North Korea.

Vietnam takes noncompliance seriously, but believes that such matters are best addressed through the NPT.

-- The prospect of Parties violating and then withdrawing from the Treaty.

Referring to North Korea, Phong said that this was a "sensitive matter." Phong emphasized that Vietnam strongly supports the Six-Party Process, but cautioned that North Korea does not react well to unilateral "pressure." He expressed hope that a new U.S. Administration would adopt a more "flexible" approach through the Six-Party Talks.

-- Fulfilling the Treaty's obligation for the fullest possible international cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy consistent with the Treaty's nonproliferation obligations.

Phong said that Vietnam fully supports this "pillar," including, he emphasized, as it applies to Iran.

-- Fulfilling the Treaty's obligations to pursue negotiations relating to nuclear disarmament.

Vietnam strongly supports all such negotiations, including the Six-Party Talks and any possible discussions concerning Iran.

-- Transparency on the part of nuclear weapon states with regard to their nuclear weapons forces and policies.

Phong said that Vietnam supports this, but underscored Vietnam's position that the ultimate goal of the NPT is complete disarmament of all states.

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